



Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

March 26, 2003

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a flu-like, respiratory illness, probably caused by a virus. Since Mid-February, the World Health Organization has been investigating outbreaks of SARS in Hanoi, Vietnam and in Hong Kong and the Guangdong province in the Peoples' Republic of China, as well as suspect cases in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Taiwan.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A fever over 100.4 degrees which lasts for several days, coughing, and shortness of breath. Other possible symptoms include headache, muscular stiffness, loss of appetite, confusion, rash and diarrhea.

Q: How quickly can someone get the disease after being exposed to it?

One to seven days (average of 4 days).

Q: How does someone catch it?

It appears to spread through close contact, such as between family members or between patient and doctor. It is believed to be spread through coughing, sneezing, and other contact with nasal fluids.

Q: What causes it?

The exact cause is unknown. It is believed to be caused by a virus.

Q: What should I do if I suspect I have SARS?

First, if you have not traveled to Asia in the past 10 days, or lived with or cared for someone who is ill with SARS, then you are not likely to have SARS. If you have traveled to Asia in the past 10 days, and currently have a high fever and/or flu-like symptoms, you should see a doctor as soon as possible. Remember to tell the doctor about your recent travel.

Q. What can I do to prevent the spread of SARS?

Careful handwashing with soap and water can help reduce the spread of respiratory illness including influenza and the common cold. Wash your hands after sneezing, coughing, blowing your nose, etc.

Q: Are there any cases of SARS in the United States?

It is difficult to tell who has SARS and who has a cold or flu because we do not yet know what causes SARS. The Centers for Disease Control reports that there are about 40 suspect cases of SARS being investigated in the US.

Q: What are the chances of recovering from SARS?

In the United States, no one has died from SARS. In the rest of the world, 3 out of 100 people have died.

Q: is it dangerous to travel to Asia? Should I cancel my trip?

The Centers for Disease Control advises that nonessential travel to Vietnam, Hong Kong, and the Guangdong Province of the Peoples' Republic of China should probably be postponed until further notice.

Please visit www.cdc.gov, www.who.int, contact your Local Health Department, or the Utah Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology at (801) 538-6191 if you want more information.